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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME LIII

MAY 1919

NUMBER 3

THE SUPREME TEST OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy a hundred years ago was a replevin of natural rights. The middle classes won what kings, church, and nobles had monopolized. Democracy then grew commercialized. Its members sought justice in heaven and practiced charity on earth; but they used wage-earners as parts of their factories. They were honest but not socially minded. Their virtues were largely negative or aristocratic.

The gospel of a living Christ was not impotent, however. Democracy began to feel that it had duties as well as rights, the obligation to give justice as well as to get justice.

Social morality began to inspire individual morality. The teaching of Jesus began to replace the teaching of ecclesiastics. And as the masses began in their turn to demand rights the new conscience of democracy began to admit the justice of their claims. Democracy submitted itself to a moral test.

This, however, only partially describes the situation of today. We have seen nations that had been denied democracy turning to a new absolutism—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Democracy is on trial. Having shown itself mightier than monarchies, it has now to show itself greater than its own past. The new spirit which has begun to move its best representatives must become the spirit of the democratic movement as a whole.

He who believes in a God of justice and love must believe in the ultimate outcome of the present unrest. But such faith cannot be passive. To believe in Jesus is not simply to await the decision of struggle. It is to believe in the constructive power of a democracy filled with and governed by the spirit of Jesus. Faith must be more than a conviction that one's sins have been forgiven. It must undertake to make reconciliation the order of the day. Those who

have only partially enjoyed the blessings of democracy must be given justice. To give such justice is not merely Christian duty; it is plain good sense. Men and women who have been economic pawns now demand the treatment due real persons. There can be no refusal to such a demand without revolution.

There are two ways by which this larger justice will arrive. The one is that of revolution. The other is that of good-will, which is only another way of saying the democratizing of privilege.

The only real democracy which the world has ever seen has grown up under the inspiration of Anglo-American Protestantism. This is no accident, for democracy is really a process of democratizing privilege, and this is impossible unless there comes into the hearts of men a desire to sacrifice willingly. Democratization based upon terror is not the Christian method. The extension of privilege through co-operation is the way of the gospel. Not the red flag but the cross of Christ is its symbol.

The chief message of the church just now is to the privileged classes, including its own members. That message is both an exhortation to duty and a message of hope. The church must socialize the mind of Christ, and it must believe that the way he trod is the way which all privileged classes must tread. Church members, as few others, enjoy the privilege of free personal life. They must give justice by so organizing business and all relations that others may enjoy the same privilege. They must treat their employees as persons—not as a labor commodity. They must make personality superior to profit. To do this is to express the divine democracy of the mind of Christ, who, rejecting the ambition to be equal with God, sought to be the servant of the human race.